

Opening Statement
Rep. Ralph Hall (R-TX), Ranking Member
House Science and Technology Committee
Monitoring, Measurement and Verification of Greenhouse Gas Emissions II: The Role of Federal and Academic Research and Monitoring Programs
April 22, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank you for holding this hearing today on monitoring, measuring and verifying greenhouse gas emissions. I appreciate your leadership on this very important topic.

While this may not be the most exciting part of the climate change debate the Congress will have this year, I truly believe it is one of the most important. Knowing exactly how many pollutants are being emitted into the environment and establishing a verifiable baseline is a requirement for virtually every environmental law our country has passed. Without knowing the current state of things, it is impossible for us to truly assess the impact we are having on the environment, good or bad. If we don't know where we are starting, how can we prove that we have made any progress?

Mr. Chairman, you and I both sit on another Committee that is focusing heavily on the climate change debate. The entire premise of the debate in the Energy and Commerce Committee is based on the idea that we can accurately measure, monitor and verify greenhouse gas emissions coming from all sectors of the economy. It is also based on the idea that we can accurately measure, monitor and verify greenhouse gases removed from the atmosphere through off-sets. Setting a cap implies that we know where we currently stand; the trade part implies that we know where it is all coming from. We are betting the entire U.S. economy on the assumption that verifiable data collection and monitoring is as simple as wanting it to be.

The hearing we are having this morning demonstrates that we do not have these abilities yet. Our witnesses are going to tell us about the need for greater scientific information. About the need for an accurate emission baseline in order to implement any regulatory scheme. About the necessity of developing tools and protocols for verifying sources and sinks of greenhouse gases. The fact that we are still early on in the research and development phase of these methods and monitoring technologies means that we cannot, in good faith, assure the American people that any regulatory framework designed to regulate greenhouse gas emissions based on such methods and technology will not be harmful to the economy.

Accurate measurements, verifiable data and the integrity of methodology are the very things that form the foundation of any regulatory scheme and are the instruments necessary for responsible governance. Albert Einstein once said, "If we knew what we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?" Mr. Chairman, I couldn't agree more with this sentiment.

Our Committee must continue to be at the forefront of this debate because the work we do here is the groundwork needed by other Committees to do their own work. So I have to thank you once again for holding this hearing, and I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses.